

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:* Loren C. Huhta, PO Box 1392, Thompson Falls, MT 59873
2. *Type of action:* Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit 30019129-76N
3. *Water source name:* Clark Fork River
4. *Location affected by action:* SE of section 16, T 21N, R 29W, Sanders County
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*
The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311, MCA are met. The applicant is seeking a water right to pump water from the Clark Fork River at a rate of up to 25 gpm of flow and a total annual volume of 1 acre-foot for lawn & garden irrigation on .4 acres from 4/1 through 9/30. The applicant's home is served by a public water supply system, but he does not wish to tax the system for irrigation purposes.
6. *Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:*
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)
MT Dept of F, W & P website, MT Natural Heritage Program, MT Historical Society and the MT DEQ.

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

Determination: This source is not identified as being dewatered either chronically or periodically.

Water quality - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

Determination: The area of the Clark Fork River is on the 303(d) list as being water quality impaired. It does support uses such as recreation, aquatic life, agricultural and industrial. But it only partially supports cold-water fish and does not support drinking water. A small appropriation of this type is not expected to change this determination by itself, however, over time the cumulative impact of many small actions may.

Groundwater - Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

Determination: No impacts to groundwater are expected by this action.

DIVERSION WORKS - Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

Determination: The applicant 2 hp electric pump will be utilized to provide water to the 5 zone system.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species - Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."

Determination: Although older Bull Trout are found in this source, no impacts are expected as a result of this action. No Grizzly Bears or Canadian Lynx are expected to frequent this subdivided area. Bald Eagles have been witnessed in the trees along the river nearby, but this action is not expected to impact them either.

Wetlands - Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.

Determination: There are no wetlands appurtenant to this action.

Ponds - For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.

Determination: Not applicable.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

Determination: This action will improve moisture content on the site, however, the application rate is not high enough to make the ground unstable. No saline problems have been identified in this area.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

Determination: It is the applicant's goal to utilize this system to help in the control of Knapweed. Without the use of herbicides or insects to bolster his efforts, his success might not be as good as hoped.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

Determination: No impacts are expected.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.*

Determination: No sites of importance have been identified. Any that may have been there have already been removed during development and building in this subdivision.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water, and energy not already addressed.*

Determination: There will be a slight increase in power demand to run the pump.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

Determination: This area has been subdivided for some time. The action is consistent with like plans in the Thompson Falls area.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

Determination: No impacts are expected by this small appropriation.

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.*

Determination: No impacts are anticipated if this action takes place.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes___ No_X_. If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination:

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? Changes have already occurred.
- (c) Existing land uses? No changes since the home was built.
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No, the changes have occurred.
- (f) Demands for government services? Potential for slight increase in demands.
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No
- (h) Utilities? Slight increase in demand for power to run the pump.
- (i) Transportation? No
- (j) Safety? Doubtful
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None identified.

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*** Although there may be secondary and cumulative impacts from actions of this nature, at this time they are so small the impacts are virtually immeasurable.

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** No mitigation measures are justified at this time.

4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** The denial of this application would force the applicant to utilize the public water system to irrigate his lawn which could be cost prohibitive and cause overuse problems with the system. Failure to use either of these alternatives would force the owner to landscape his lot in rock, etc. or let the noxious weeds remain.

PART III. Conclusion

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: Because no significant or cumulative impacts were identified in this EA, it is the appropriate level of analysis for this action.

Name of person responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Wes McAlpin

Title: Water Resources Specialist, Kalispell RO, DNRC Water Resources

Date: September 8, 2006